

General Management Plan Newsletter

Setting a New Course for Saratoga National Historical Park

The National Park Service is preparing a General Management Plan for Saratoga National Historical Park. This "master plan", which will take about two years to complete, will provide guidance for management decisions that affect park resources and visitor experiences over the next 20 years.

A new plan is needed for Saratoga NHP because its existing master plan was approved in 1969 and no longer provides adequate guidance for park managers. Since 1969, many changes have occurred at the park. The battlefield acreage has doubled in size, adding such key historic features as the sites of General Gates' Headquarters and the Bemis Tavern. In addition, the park has assumed responsibility for the Saratoga Monument from New York State.

Public Involvement Update

The planning team began its dialogue with the public during the last week of March 2000, at forums in Stillwater and in Schuylerville. Over 40 attendees participated and provided thoughtful commentary for the planning team. Participants discussed the park's purpose and significance statements (see [Work in Progress](#) section), made suggestions about the programs and stories that should be presented at the park, and described their ideal park experience. Here is a sample of the ideas expressed at the public forums:

- *"Do more to make visitors at Saratoga feel the same powerful emotions people experience in places such as Gettysburg and Valley Forge".*
 - *"Place more emphasis on the importance of the site to American and world history".*
 - *"Create better links with the historically significant areas outside the park boundaries".*
 - *"Work with the communities of Stillwater and Schuylerville".*
 - *"Interpret other related historical sites and events in the Champlain Corridor".*
 - *"Develop a trail along Old Champlain canal towpath".*
 - *"Emphasize that General Schuyler was a figure of regional and national importance".*
 - *"Improve both entrances to Saratoga National Historical Park. They are not worthy of a national park".*
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Work in Progress

To date, the planning team has developed the "foundation" for the plan. This "foundation" includes the park's purpose and significance statements, which flow from the park's authorizing legislation and legislative history, goals for management, and issues for the plan to address. These items are all in draft form. Please review them and let us know what you think.

Park Purpose

Saratoga National Historical Park preserves and protects the battlefield and the sites associated with the 1777 surrender of British forces at Saratoga, which was a decisive event in the winning of American independence, and interprets other sites, events, and people related to the military campaigns in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Park Significance

Saratoga National Historical Park:

- honors the participants and preserves the grounds where a major British military offense in 1777 ended in a surrender that heartened the cause for independence and brought about the international recognition and aid essential to securing our nation's freedom.
- contains the country estate of General Philip Schuyler, an outstanding figure during the revolutionary period and commander of the northern theater of operations between 1775 and 1777.
- presents a richly-monumented landscape significant in the early commemorative movement to highlight shared American identity.

"...on this Day has Been fought one of the Greatest Battles Ever was fought in Amarrca, & I Trust we have Convinced the British Butchers the Cowardly yankees Can & when their is a Call for it, will, fight --"

(from the Journals of Henry Dearborn, Commander of the American Light Infantry, written on the evening after the first battle at Saratoga on September 19, 1777)

Management Goals

The following draft goals articulate the ideals that Saratoga National Historical Park and its partners should strive to attain in perpetuity:

Resource Protection

- The landscapes, buildings, monuments, structures, archaeological sites, artifacts and archives that are significant to the outcome and commemoration of the Battles of Saratoga are protected, rehabilitated and maintained in good condition.
- Saratoga battlefield is restored, maintained, and interpreted to its tactically- significant condition.
- The park works cooperatively with local communities to preserve the key elements of the historic scene on adjacent lands, to the greatest practical extent.
- The park contributes to the accumulation of knowledge and understanding of cultural and natural resources related to its significance.

Visitor Use

- Appropriate recreational activities are permitted to take place only in locations and at levels that ensure the long-term protection of the park's cultural and natural resources.
- Visitors safely enjoy a variety of recreational and educational experiences accessible to all segments of the population.

Interpretation

- The public understands and appreciates the sacred and commemorative nature of the park's landscape and the significance of the military events that took place here relative to the outcome of the American Revolution, as well as their impact on world political developments.
- The park provides quality interpretive and educational programs that make the park story and resources available to a range of audiences.
- The park fosters opportunities for visitors to make emotional and intellectual connections with the meanings inherent in the park's resources.

Cooperation

- The park establishes partnerships and cooperative programming to foster stewardship of its resources and to develop educational programs.
- The park participates in regional, national and international initiatives that place the park in its broader context.

Planning Issues

The planning team identified numerous issues to be addressed in the plan. Some of these include:

- The park's resources are located in three, non-contiguous units strung out along Route 4 from Schuylerville in the North, through Victory, to Stillwater --the site of the battlefield. With limited signage and orientation, park visitors have difficulty finding their way to the park sites and understanding the relationship between the sites.
- The current sequencing of interpretive stops along the battlefield tour road addresses the second Battle of Saratoga before the first. This leads to confusion and makes visitor understanding of the relationship of events quite difficult.
- For the past 10 years, Saratoga County has been the second fastest growing county in New York. The region's character is changing from agricultural (dairy farms) to suburban subdivisions for the capital district. There is an increased demand for recreational open space and many residents and neighbors wish to use the park for activities unrelated to its history, such as biking, jogging, bird watching, skiing and snow shoeing.
- At current staffing levels, the park is unable to fulfill many of its existing management and interpretive requirements. Additional park staff will be required to enable the park to participate in regional initiatives (e.g. Champlain Valley, Erie Canalway).
- The park's visitor center is undersized and outmoded, and fails to meet current visitor orientation and interpretive needs.
- A number of significant related historic properties are located outside the park's boundaries. These include the Surrender site, the Marshall House, and the Field of Grounded Arms. The general management plan should consider cooperative strategies for recognition, long-term protection, and interpretation of these sites.
- With the creation of the Northway (I-87), the primary gateway to the park has been changed from the Route 4 entrance to the rear entrance via the park's maintenance facilities. As a result, the sense of formal entry at the park is lost. In addition, highway signs to accommodate the new national cemetery now send visitors to the Old Saratoga units rather than to the battlefield unit. As a result, visitors often do not enter the visitor center until well into their sojourn at the park.

Your Ideas are Important

A first step in planning the future of the park is to gather the ideas and interests of park neighbors, local and regional officials, program partners, and park users. Your input will help shape the goals, principles and strategies that form the core of the general management plan.

Next Steps

Next, the planning team will review the comments received, collect and analyze resource information, and develop preliminary management alternatives. Our next newsletter will keep you informed of our progress.

Feedback

We would like to hear your ideas. Call, send a fax, write a letter, or e-mail your thoughts and suggestions to the planning team. Please include your name and address. Send your comments to:

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